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## **BENNETT PAYS TRIBUTE TO FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE, PAUL COVERDELL OF GEORGIA**

*Mourns great loss the Senate will sustain from his absence*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah) today delivered remarks in the U.S. Senate following the untimely passing last night of his friend and colleague Sen. Paul Coverdell (R-GA). A transcript of Senator Bennett's comments follows:

When my constituents ask me what's the nicest thing about being a senator, I have a ready answer. It's the people – the people we get to meet and the opportunities we have to interact with some of the most extraordinary individuals throughout the world.

When you say that, my constituents immediately think of the great names – presidents of the United States, presidents of other countries, famous prime ministers. The school children look at me and ask if I've met President Clinton and they're always in awe when I say yes. And then others, when I tell them of having met President Gorbachev or President Mubarak or Chairman Arafat, they say they can understand why I think the people I get to meet is really the best part of my job and the extraordinary benefit that comes from being a senator.

That's true. Meeting these famous people is something of a trip and a great opportunity. But I always explain to them that the great privilege is not just meeting all the famous people, it's meeting my fellow senators.

This is an extraordinary body filled with extraordinary individuals. Many are people whose names never get mentioned in the papers outside their own states or outside the circle of the beltway, but who bring to this body an incredible background of wisdom, experience, perspective, humor, balance and understanding that makes it a great privilege and blessing for all of us to be here.

Paul Coverdell and I came to the Senate in the same class. We were sworn in on the same day in 1993 and we went through the experience of being freshmen senators, who didn't quite know our way around, together. We would get together on a weekly basis with others in that class and swap stories about how we had foolishly gone to the wrong room or found ourselves buried in the unexpected tide of work and mail and phone calls and requests. We went through all that together

as friends.

We decided, taking advantage of our position as freshmen and serving the minority, that we would use the time that comes with that condition to educate ourselves and prepare ourselves for the service we were embarking on.

Paul arranged for a trip to Kennebunkport to see his good friends, George and Barbara. The rest of us didn't call them George and Barbara. To us it was Mr. President and Mrs. Bush, but Paul knew them well enough and went back far enough with them that he arranged for the freshmen class of Republican senators to go to Maine and spend a day with the Bushes. It was about three or four months after the election and President Bush was full of stories, reflections, philosophic observations. It was a wonderful time. We also went together under the sponsorship of Senator Dole to New Jersey to have a similar day with President Nixon.

Paul was one of those who would use these and any other occasions to learn as much as he could, soak up as much as he could, prepare himself as much as he could for whatever might come. That was one of the delightful things about him. He was enormously curious, always searching, and always anxious to find out how he could be of greater help.

We finally stopped meeting every week as we got busier ourselves, and as we got a little more experienced in the way the Senate works so that we didn't need to commiserate quite so much about our earlier blunders. But that class remained close. Paul is the one who moved on to a leadership position in our class. We were all proud of him, all happy to support him.

It goes without saying that we will miss him terribly. But it is my conviction that as we mourn, we do not mourn for Paul.

I don't know the details of what goes on but I think it not out of the question to think that John Chafee may be showing Paul the ropes now, suggesting to him, "it will work a little better if you go this way." "Yeah, I tried that when I first got here." "Paul, let me show you the ropes, as it were." That may not be happening but I don't think it's beyond the realm of possibility.

We do not mourn for Paul. We mourn for ourselves – for the loss we have sustained, not for the problems he faces. The problems he faced are behind him now as far as this life is concerned. And knowing Paul, he will be learning, inquiring, asking questions, trying to find out and progressing still further as he always did as a member of the Senate.

It is our loss that moves us to tears and the fact that we will no longer have his companionship and his wisdom and his friendship. But just as I suggest that John Chafee may be greeting Paul, we can be confident that whatever the time might be

for the rest of us, Paul will be there to greet us. And that helps lift some of the gloom and sorrow that we feel on this occasion.

I extend to Nancy and other members of Paul's family my deepest sympathy and condolence at this time and express the gratitude once again for the experience I've had as a senator of knowing great people, meeting extraordinary individuals, and partaking of their wisdom and guidance. I count Paul Coverdell in the first ranks of that group.

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<http://www.senate.gov/~bennett>